REMARKS BY THOMAS P. DUNNE
INNOVATIVE USES SYMPOSIUM
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Thanks to Region 5's Center for Excellence and the Water Environment Federation for inviting me to speak this morning.

As you heard when I was introduced, I am the Deputy Assistant Administrator for EPA's Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Response, better known as OSWER. Some of you may be wondering the same thing my staff has been wondering for the past month: what is a senior OSWER manager doing at a water quality symposium?

That's a good question.

Some people back in Washington think that I accepted your invitation because the symposium is being held in Chicago, the city of my birth, my hometown, and one of my favorite places in the world. Some think I came here because it's being held in a high class hotel, and one of my favorite hotels in the world, the Omni Chicago. And some think I'm here because it's close to EPA's Region 5 office, and I can do some OSWER regional business on the same trip.

All those things are true. But that's not why I'm here. In order to clear up any misconceptions, and in imitation of David Letterman, here are the top five reasons I decided to attend your innovative uses symposium.

Reason #1: the innovative, safe, recycling and reuse of waste, whenever technically feasible and economically justifiable, is my top priority at EPA. I had not been in OSWER long before it struck me that virtually all the regulations required by law for the safe disposal of waste had been written. Landfills and incinerators in this country are now well regulated. Their environmental risks have

been dramatically reduced from what was common 30 years ago.

Yet in my mind it didn't make much sense to continue sending more and more waste to disposal facilities, no matter how well controlled they were. Those wastes in many cases were made up of still-valuable materials that we were literally throwing away. At the same time, the value of many of those wastes was skyrocketing in the global marketplace. Moreover, it's becoming harder and harder to site new waste disposal facilities, because no one wants them in their back yards.

So it seemed clear to me that we needed to undertake a dramatic shift in priorities in EPA's Office of Solid Waste. For both economic and environmental reasons, we needed to shift our attention from the end of the pipe – the final disposal of waste – to the beginning of the manufacturing and production process. We needed to find new, environmentally sound ways of recycling and/or reusing wastes, so less would need disposal. As an added benefit, by reducing the amount of virgin material or energy needed to manufacture products, we could reduce the amount of pollution generated. In short, the beneficial reuse of waste seemed to be a singularly effective way of protecting the environment, while bringing substantial economic benefits as well.

As far as I was concerned, it was a no-brainer. Back in the Office of Solid Waste, we've begun to emphasize materials management in a program called the Resource Conservation Challenge. Through the Challenge, we've already initiated partnerships with the paper/packaging, coal ash, and electronics industries. We're starting others to manage materials like construction/demolition debris. I expect still others to be formed in the future.

All these partnerships will lead to the increased recycling and/or reuse of

materials we used to consider waste. And some of these new, beneficial uses will indeed be innovative. So when I read that your symposium was dedicated to innovative uses of waste, I had to come to applaud your efforts.

Reason #2 for my being here is the emphasis on partnerships that I alluded to a moment ago. To me, partnerships, collaborations, voluntary initiatives, and other kinds of non-regulatory actions are critically important to our environmental future.

Don't get me wrong: our environmental regulations have served us very well over the past 35 years. Many of the dramatic environmental improvements we've seen since 1970 are the direct result of environmental regulations. In fact, given the political realities of the 1960s and 70s, I believe that little environmental progress would have been possible without tough laws, tough regulations, and tough enforcement. A strong regulatory presence must – and will – be maintained at EPA.

But the regulatory system has many weaknesses. One of those weaknesses is the time, money, and energy it takes to get regulations out of the agency and into force. The development cycle for our most important, visible regulations at EPA averages four to five years. From the beginning of work on a rule to its publication in final form, six to ten years – and longer – are not unheard of.

Another weakness is the contentiousness that leads to litigation and even more delay. Too often, environmental policy is decided in the courts, which contributes to a loss of faith in our system of governance.

Over the last decade, EPA has been experimenting with a number of different kinds of partnerships, collaborations, and voluntary initiatives outside the regulatory framework. We've seen how effective they can be, delivering

environmental benefits beyond those required by law without the costs of regulations.

So I believe that non-regulatory options for reducing risk should be moved from the fringes of environmental policy to center stage. We should consider using partnerships and voluntary actions as the starting point for risk reductions. Not as a marginal addition to regulations, not as pilot projects, but as the starting point. When I read that this symposium was going to bring potential partners together to look for opportunities to control environmental risks outside the regulatory system, I figured I had to be here.

The third reason I came here was the intrinsically cross-media nature of most beneficial reuse partnerships. I knew it might look unusual for an EPA OSWER official to attend a water conference. But it shouldn't be. No matter where we work, the very nature of innovative reuse requires us to build bridges with other offices and organizations.

For example, EPA's Office of Solid Waste has developed a partnership with coal combustors to reuse fly ash. The coal combustion industry is marketing fly ash for use in concrete for three reasons. It's profitable, it helps them avoid water quality regulations related to land disposal, and it opens up millions of square yards of landfill space.

In 2002, about 46 million tons of coal combustion products were diverted from landfills for different uses. Those diversions saved about 40 million cubic yards of landfill space. Moreover, making cement with fly ash uses much less energy than using virgin materials. Reusing 12 million tons of fly ash to make concrete reduces greenhouse gas emissions by more than 11 million tons.

This is an excellent example of the cross-media benefits of reuse. We see

benefits across the board in the air, water, and land. And there are substantial benefits to the economy, too. By the way, I'm delighted to see that Dave Goss of the American Coal Ash Association is on the program committee here.

So as you develop your partnerships, keep in mind the many different organizations that could provide valuable assistance. Your starting point may be water quality, but I encourage you to throw out a much wider net to find partners. EPA has been a stovepipe agency for too long. The partnerships you're developing should be broadly inclusive of all the available expertise.

In this regard, I'm happy to see that Region 5's Susan Mooney, from the RCRA program, is one of your session moderators. EPA's air office already has a voluntary partnership in place working to reuse agricultural biomass. State governments and utilities also are looking at the reuse possibilities of agricultural and municipal biomass.

Don't reinvent the wheel. Build your partnerships on the work that's already underway. That's the fastest way to the best results.

That brings me to **the fourth reason** for coming today. I want to emphasize the absolute importance of results. Your ability to measure and publicize the results of your innovative reuse partnerships will be crucial to their success.

EPA has been criticized in the past for our inability to measure results very well. Years ago, we had a tendency to think we could measure success by the number of regulations issued, or permits written. Lately we've begun doing a better job of measuring success on the basis of improvements out in the environment. That's what the American people ultimately care about.

As you think about building innovative reuse partnerships, never lose sight of the results you're after. It will not be enough to hold a conference every year. It

will not be enough to network, transfer information, or develop innovative processes and systems. Those activities may be necessary for success, but they're not sufficient.

At the end of the day, you MUST be able to show more than that. How many tons of which residuals have been reused? How many tons of which kinds of pollution have been kept out of waterways? How many tons of air pollution have been avoided? How have all these accomplishments contributed to meeting public health goals? Those are the only goals that mean anything to the people that pay our salaries.

The fifth and final reason I'm here today is related to national security and the global price of oil and gas. Probably the single biggest factor driving the increased recycling and reuse of materials today is the recent sharp growth in global economies, particularly in China, India, and other Asian nations. That's driven up the global price of the raw materials used to manufacture products.

Crude oil prices have received the most publicity, rising to over $60 a barrel a few days ago. In nominal dollars, that's the highest price ever. And the second highest ever in constant dollars. The international prices of cement, paper, steel, and most metals have shot up, too.

Unusually high prices for all these commodities may not hold. They've always fluctuated, depending on economic conditions. But I suspect that, in the future, they'll be fluctuating within much higher ranges.

Look at oil. The oil price shocks a quarter century ago were an aberration. Historic high prices were followed by historic lows. Given the political instability in many oil-producing nations today, and escalating global demand for crude oil, it's unlikely we'll ever again see oil at $10, or even $20, a barrel. In fact, some

experts are predicting that we may see prices approach $100 a barrel within the next year or so.

The United States today imports 60 percent of its oil needs. Continued increases in the price of oil threaten our economy, and they threaten our security. Never before in our history have we had a greater incentive to use oil and oil products more efficiently, and develop domestic supplies of energy.

That's where you come in. If global oil prices have risen so high that digging up gooey tar sands in Alberta is hugely profitable, then the price paid for fuels from biomass are likely to be profitable as well. This country can use the fuels, whether they come from animal feeding operations, solid waste landfills, sewage treatment facilities, farming, or other biomass-generating industries. We need to get these kinds of projects moving.

A lot of the expertise needed to do that is in this room. A lot more is spread around the country. EPA's Region 6, for example, has been working on biowaste-to-energy projects for a couple years. They've developed a GIS-based tool to bring together the generators and potential users of biomass fuel.

State governments are beginning to see the value in biogas, and some are requiring that it be used to generate electricity in-state. I've heard that the state of Minnesota is supporting efforts to produce energy from turkey manure. Massachusetts is requiring that, by 2009, four percent of its electric power must come from wind, solar, or farm wastes. We need to get busy pulling together the right partners to generate energy from biowaste on a much larger scale than today.

So those are the five reasons I'm here today. To push for and support: 1) the increased reuse of waste, 2) partnerships, 3) cross-media activities, 4) real-world results, and 5) increased domestic supplies of energy. You're on the right path.

You just need to pick up the speed.

Thank you.